

Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council

4980 Bayline Drive, 4th Floor, N. Ft. Myers, FL 33917-3909 (941) 656-7720

P.O. Box 3455, N. Ft. Myers, FL 33918-3455 SUNCOM 749-7720

FAX 941-656-7724

June 20, 2000

Mr. Elmar Kurzbach
Planning Division, Environmental Branch
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Post Office Box 4970
JACKSONVILLE, FL 32232-0019

RE: Mod Waters Project, Tamiami Trail/U.S. 41 Drainage Modifications For Shark River Slough.

Dear Mr. Kurzbach:

As per our telephone conversation, Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council staff has received and read the Corps' Notice regarding the four alternatives for modifying U.S. 41 to allow passage of greater flows into Shark River Slough. The Regional Planning Council has previously gone on record as supporting increased flows into Everglades National Park, provided that such flows are not deleterious to the environment or public safety.

As you know, U.S. 41 in this area is an evacuation route for both the Southwest Florida Region (particularly Collier County) and the South Florida Region (particularly Dade County). Therefore, any construction activities eventually planned to implement the increased flow regimen must take into account that the roadway will need to remain open; particularly during hurricane season (June 1 through December 1). Given this parameter, Regional staff submits the following comments.

Staff believes that, from an environmental standpoint, the existing roadway will require complete replacement. The original Tamiami Trail was built during the 1920s as a causeway across the Big Cypress Swamp and the Everglades. The culverts that were originally constructed within the roadway were never intended to do more than prevent the roadway from flooding. Environmental Protection was not a consideration. Therefore, staff believes that the original roadway should be removed, and replaced by a new roadway.

Staff is insufficiently familiar with the surrounding area to comment as to whether the new roadway should be north or south of the existing structure. However, the new roadway should be raised above the current elevation. Bridges, rather than culverts, should be used to allow passage of water through the roadway. Of course, the new roadway should be opened prior to the closing of the original.



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TO: Mr. Elmar Kurzbach
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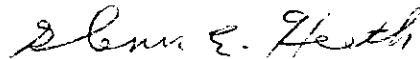
Given the age and significance of the Tamiami Trail, staff believes that it may be listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Any redesign of the roadway will have to take this factor into account.

Also of importance with regard to redesign is maintenance of at least the current roadway parameters (number of lanes, official signage, width of the roadway, roadway drainage characteristics, etc.). The Southwest Florida Region's Metropolitan Planning Organizations may wish to comment upon these matters. If these agencies are not on your address list, Regional staff can provide their addresses to your office.

Please include the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council on the address list for any further notices or correspondence regarding these matters. Please feel free to contact either myself, or the Council's Executive Director, Mr. Wayne Daltry, regarding matters associated with the Everglades Modifications and pertaining to the lower west coast of Florida.

Sincerely,

SOUTHWEST FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL



Glenn E. Heath, AICP
Senior Planner/Assistant DRI Coordinator

GEH/

cc: Mr. Wayne Daltry, Executive Director, Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council
Mr. Glen Ahlert, AICP, Coordinator, Lee County MPO